MODEL NEIGHBORHOOD BOARD AND CITY DEMONSTRATION AGENCY

RECREATION CONFERENCE

Boys' Club, 115 Warren Street, Roxbury, Massachusetts

September 21, 1968

RECREATIONAL NEEDS OF THE MODEL CITIES AREA

Model Neighborhood Board
RECREATION COMMITTEE

Chairman: Mrs. Lena Saunders
Co-Chairman: Mrs. Rita Henderson

Prepared by:

Model Neighborhood
Board Staff

Indoor Program Weak

The indoor program of the Recreation Division is the weakest link in year-round recreation program, although it extends throughout the longest season.

The program lacks variety. Gymnasium activities dominate at all centers. Arts and crafts, drama, music, social recreation, and other forms of non-althletic recreation are limited or non-existent.

Greater diversity could be developed not by decreasing the offerings in games and sports, but by expanding other phases of the program. Experimental programs in non-althletic activities could be initiated at centers where conditions indicate considerable interest and reasonable assurance of success.

Weaknesses in Outdoor Program

Several weaknesses are evident in the playground program of the Recreation Division. Lack of real coordination between the School Department and the Parks and Recreation Department causes an unbalanced program of activities to be offered at some facilities.

The playground program should be extended into the spring and fall. This would fill the gaps in the division's year-round program. During May, June, and September activities could be conducted on a reduced schedule of operation at some key and better-equipped playgrounds or wherever attendance might warrant.

Programs of the School Department

School center program come closer to the ideal than indoor programs conducted by the Parks and Recreation Department.

The school programs reach only young adults and adults since they operate in the evening and but twice a week. Very few centers have rooms that can be used as general games rooms, social rooms, or lounge rooms.

The sharp decline in attendance since 1948 and the high costs of operating the centers substantiate the need for reexamining the entire school center program. It may be advisable to extend the program to all ages by operating more hours per day and more days per week.

The School Department's playground program suffers particularly from limited play space. Furthermore, it is restricted to children up to 14 years of age.

IMPROVED PROGRAM

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General Personnel Problems

The Parks and Recreation Department does not have a well-rounded staff capable of conducting a full-fledged recreational program.. There is a lack of well-trained personnel both at the leader's level and at the supervisor's level.

What Boston needs is a systematic program of modernization, along the lines of work now being done in Philadelphia. This modernization should begin with the larger areas, especially playfields.

What Else Can Be Done

Several other steps can be taken to improve the design and maintenance of outdoor facilities. Firstly, the Director of Recreation should participate in all issues of design and construction at all stages of development. Secondly, a program of preventive maintenance is needed. Finally, sensible distribution of custodial personnel would guarantee that smaller facilities would receive regular care.

MORE USEFUL INDOOR FACILITIES

Measuring the City

According to the National Recreation Association a city should have a general recreation building or an indoor recreation center available for use throughout the year for every 20,000 people.

Even if the 28 municipal buildings and schools used for organized recreation are classified as general recreation buildings or indoor recreation centers - design and use indicates they are not - Boston fails to meet the standard. Some of the deficiency is made up by the availability of so many private centers.

Nine districts of the city fail to meet the above standard. Back Bay, West Roxbury, and South Dorchester do not have a single public recreation center.

Municipal Buildings as Recreation Facilities

Municipal buildings in Boston used for recreation purposes are very similar. The typical municipal building is a two - or three-story structure in which gymnasium and show facilities are the key elements. Some of the buildings also have auditoria or combined gymnasis-auditoria.

Municipal Buildings as Recreation Facilities (continued)

The gymnasia are the areas around which almost the entire recreation program revolves. They vary in size from one building to another. Some are large enough to permit several uses at the same time. Others are too small for multiple use.

The municipal buildings themselves vary in age, condition, and standards of cleanliness. Most of them are 40 or 50 years old. Some are poorly lighted, while others need painting or structural repairs.

No municipal building has the separate areas - social rooms, lounge rooms, etc. - which are part of an ideal recreation plant. Almost everyone, however, has available space which can be converted into such areas.

Modernize Existing Facilities

Boston should undertake a remodeling program, a program to convert municipal buildings into genuine indoor recreation centers.

This should begin in areas where there is a lack of sufficient indoor recreation facilities - public or private - and in buildings which do not require extensive physical changes. Brighton, Charlestown, and Tobin Memorial municipal buildings would be good pilot projects.

Making Up the Deficiencies

The City Planning Board recommended development each year of one large play area and three areas of junior size, or extension of an equivalent number of existing facilities, to make up the deficiencies in outdoor facilities.

During the 1949-1954 period, the number of large and small play areas developed and the total acreage added through both City and MDC construction was generally in line with the established guide.

In most, cases, however, MDC-developed facilities do not meet the exact needs of the district involved. They are too close to existing play areas or do not serve neighborhoods requiring additional recreation facilities.

Coordination Needed

There is a desperate need for coordinating the planning and construction of MDC play areas with City-owned facilities. To insure that future MDC playgrounds in Boston fit into the City's own plans, officials of the Parks and Recreation Department should consult with MDC authorities well in advance of project planning.

Use of MDC facilities must also be coordinated with City facilities. The Director of Recreation should request the use of MDC play areas for the Park and Recreation Department's supervised recreation program in districts where leadership is needed.

Deficiencies in Design and Maintenance

Boston's outdoor resources in recreation show many variations in design, construction, and condition. Some areas show keen imagination and insight in original design. Some areas were poorly designed or need modernization. Some sites are faulty. Large sections of many facilities lie undeveloped.

Surfaces of many facilities are dirt or gravel, hardly conducive to most types of play. Some areas lack apparatus and equipment. Many smaller play areas show the toll taken by vandalism and the results of substandard maintenance.

By and large, playground design is dominated by an emphasis on organized athletics. Newer influences in design, which add the features of kindergarten or pre-school facilities are beginning to appear, but on a very limited scale.

Systematic Modernization Needed

Boston has spent a considerable amount of money in recent years for playground improvements. Most of it, however, has gone into rehabilitation, deferred maintenance, and contruction of new tot lots. A relatively insignificant amount has been spent on modernization - on full development of all available space on play facilities; on development of separate areas for pre-school and for elementary school children on larger facilities; on modern apparatus and equipment.

There are no specialists (except during the playground season) in dramatics, music, arts and crafts, or nature study.

High age ratio and physical incapacities add to the personnel problem. These factors should provide several opportunities for staff replacements in a few years. High standards must be set in recruiting for vacated positions.

Small Number of Permanent Personnel

Boston had only 52 year-round personnel (including five swimming instructors) to conduct its public recreation program in 1954. On a comparative basis, Boston's ratio of one leader per 15,412 of population ranks the City next to last for 17 cities compared. In numbers of part-time personnel, the City ranks second.

Worthwhile as it is to have a large number of part-time personnel, effective recreation service rests primarily upon the number of year-round leaders who are especially trained for recreation. To present a richer program of activities, Boston needs to work toward a larger number of full-time personnel.

Salaries Comparatively Low

Salaries paid for recreation leadership in Boston are far below average. The City ranks near the bottom in compensation for recreation personnel among reporting citiies with over 500,000 population.

The relatively-low salary scales are obstacles to the attraction and retention of professionally-trained people. Before any revisions are made in the wage structure, however, standards used in recruiting must be raised considerably.

Causes of Personnel Handicaps

Several facts help to explain recreation personnel handicpas in Boston. In 1954, the City spent only 64 cents per capita for recreation leadership. This figure includes costs for leadership of both the Parks and Recreation Department and the School Department. On an inter-city basis, Boston ranked ninth among the 15 comparable cities for which data was available.

The Parks and Recreation Department spent only 7.6 per cent of its total personnel expenditures for recreation leadership in 1954. Again on an inter-city basis, Boston ranked sixth among nine large cities with combined parks and recreation departments.

MORE USEFUL OUTDOOR FACILITIES

Meeting the Standards

On the face of it, Boston's 3171 acres of parks and recreation space is far below a nationally-recognized standard of one acre per 100 people. If the 10,500 acres in facilities of the Metropolitan District Commission are added, however, Boston comes close to the standard.

Although Boston meets city-wide standards on total play space, several of its districts show glaring inadequacies. In some districts, poor distribution of play area leaves large groups of people unserved. In a few districts, some play area needs development.

A. Programs and Sources of Funds That Could Become Available

Additional funds may become available through:

1. Model City Implementation Funds

   A limited amount of Model City funds will be granted to Boston after the completion of the planning period in October, however, this money can also be used for Health, Education, Day Care, Housing, and other programs.

2. Federally-Aided Code Enforcement

   This program, if eligible for the Model City Area and if desired by the community, only allows expenditures for Street Lighting and Street Planting.

3. Federally-Aided Renewal

   This program, if desired by the community, would provide the largest sums of money for permanent Park and Recreational Facility improvements. In the Washington Park Urban Renewal Project, for example, $2,000,000 will be spent on new parks, park improvements and new playgrounds built in conjunction with new schools. (New forms of urban renewal can be designed through the Model City program to insure citizen control, building maximum feasible rehabilitation, meet the special needs of this community and avoid the failures of past programs.)

4. Additional Urban Beautification Money and Historic Preservation Grants

   Additional federal urban beautification grants may be possible for the Model City Area. Futhermore, special funds can now be obtained for historic preservation from the federal government on a matching 50/50 basis. In Model City Sub-Area 4, the Shirley-Eustis House has developed a proposal to restore the Shirley-Eustis House and has requested the State legislature to appropriate $100,000 to match a federal grant of $100,000 for the restoration of this historic mansion.

5. Federal Open Space Land Program

   New open space facilities in the Model Cities Area may be developed as part of a city-wide open space land program. This program is similar to the Federal Urban Beautification program except it provides for development of new rather than existing facilities.

RECREATION FACILITIES IN THE MODEL CITY AREA SCHEDULED TO RECEIVE URBAN BEAUTIFICATION FUNDS

Year to be funded	1967	1968	1969	1970	Total[1]
Facility and Its Acreage					
Cedar Square (.60)	---	---	---	15,000	15,000
Eliot Squre	---	---	---	---	5,000
Franklin Park(510.0)	---	---	70,000	---	380,000
Hannon Playground (1.69)	---	35,000	5,000	---	40,000
Highland Park (3.64)	---	10,000	50,000	---	100,000
Howes Park &Playground ("Scobie Park") (1.88)	---	30,000	5,000	---	35,000
Orchard Park Playground B.H.A. (3.00)	---	20,000	---	20,000	40,000
Winthrop Playground(1.47)	---	---	---	---	75,000
		$95,000	(Sub-total)		690,000)
Dillaway Thomas House					5,000
Two School Playground replacements					
Burke-Campbell School(4.0)					200,000
May replacement (4.5)					60,000
			(Sub-total		$265,000)
			TOTAL		$955,000

1. Total reflects expenditure in years 1971-1975 as well as 1967-1970, listed here.

PLANNING FOR RECREATION

Effective integration of recreation areas in the city plan, or indeed any sound plan for the acquisition and development of recreation space, must be based upon accepted objectives, principles, and standards: definite objectives to be achieved by the system, basic principles essential to attain the objectives, and specific atandards for implenemting the principles.

The chief objective sought in recreation, and which a system of areas is designed to help realize, has been called "the enrichment of living through the constructive use of leisure and the expression of normal human interest in art, dance, drama; music, sports, nature, the world of the mind, and social activities."[1] However expressed, the purpose underlying a local recreation system is the enrichment of individual and community life through the beauty and recreation opportunities which the development of such areas makes possible.

Planning Principles. Broad objectives have little significance until they are supplemented by principles that afford a basis for planning and action. Since the function of recreation areas is to serve recreation needs, the principles that underlie a recreation program (see Chapter 14) naturally have a direct bearing upon the planning of a well-balanced system of recreation areas. Such a system is achieved when it is designed to meet the following criteria:

1. Make possible recreation opportunities for all, regardless of age, color, race, creed, or economic status

2. Provide areas and facilities that make possible a great variety of recreation activities that serve a wide range of recreation interests

3. Include areas that differ widely in size, location, natural features, and potential development, and that consequently serve different recreation uses

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[1] GUIDE FOR PLANNING RECREATION PARKS IN CALIFORNIA, California Committee on Planning for Recreation, Park Areas, and Facilities, Sacramento, 1956, p. 22.

leaders that the essential objectives of recreation leadership are to guide and serve the leisure-time interests of all the people-to enlarge and deepen interests so that they will be more satisfying; to provide organization and instruction in recreation activities where sesired; to furnish opportunities for self-expression through recreation so the hours of leisure will make for joyous living.

In achieving these objectives, recreation leaders perform a variety of functions, of which the following are typical:

1. Guide and encourage individuals to acquire new interests and to gain greater satisfaction from participation in familiar activities.

2. Help to organize recreation groups and to assure successful group operation.

3. Attempt to expand and equalize recreation opportunities.

4. Teach people to acquire new or more advanced skills.

5. Provide and maintain indoor and outdoor places in which individuals and groups may engage in activities.

6. Assure safe and healthful conditions and practices at recreation areas and in recreation programs.

7. Furnish equipment and supplies essential for the enjoyment of many types of recreation.

These objectives can be achieved and these functions can be performed satisfactorily only by trained, sympathetic leaders.

4. In so far as possible, provide an equable distribution of areas in each major section of the city

5. Provide a multiple-use area as near as possible to the center of every residential neighborhood, preferably at or adjoining the elementary school, so as to afford opportunities for recreation day by day and during brief periods of leisure

6. Provide at a greater distance from the homes of the people other areas that require more space and develop them for recreation activities that require longer periods of use

7. Take into account existing outlying recreation areas and facilities that serve the people of the locality and, where advisable, include additional extra-urban areas primarily for week-end and holiday use

8. Be based upon a thorough study and appraisal of existing local recreation resources and needs, conducted with the full cooperation of citizens, municipal, school, and planning authorities, and other interested agencies

"There is no substitute for qualified leadership and any compromise in this matter is false economy. The best leadership possible is none too good to guide and serve the leisure-time interests of the American people."

Programs have failed and facilities have received little use in communities where leadership was considered unimportant or where unqualified personnel were employed as recreation leaders.

The significance of recreation leadership has become increasingly recognized and it is gaining acceptance as a profession. Recreation personnel have official status as a part of the local government team.

Lawrence K. Frank has urged that we must develop the kinds of leadership in our group activities that are "appropriate to a free society and to the goals we are seeking."[2] There is general agreement among recreation

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[2] Lawrence K. Frank, How To Be A Modern Leader New York: Associated Press, 1954, p.11.

RECREATION FACILITIES IN MODEL CITIES AREA

Outdoor Facilities

Joseph E. Johnson Memorial Playground - M.D.C.
Green & Lamartine Streets, Jamaica Plain

William Eustis Playground
Norfolk Avenue & Procter Street

Mary E. Hannon Playground
Dudley Street & Howard Avenue

William E. Carter Playground
251 Columbus Avenue

Thomas O'Day Playground
West Newton Street

Orchard Park
Chadwick Street & Yeomans Street

Ceylon Street Playground

John Winthrop Playground
Dacia Street

John J. Connolly Playground
Marcella Street

Indoor Facilities

Tobin Memorial Municipal Building
1491 Tremont Street

Vine Street Municipal Building
Vine & Dudley Streets

Cabot Street Municipal Building
230 Cabot Street

Columbia Road Municipal Building
500 Columbia Road

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES IN MODEL CITIES AREA
(continued)

Voluntary Agency Facilities

Mt. Bowdoin Y.M.C.A. - Y.W.C.A.
386 Washington Street

Denison House
25 Howard Avenue

Norfolk House Center
14 John Eliot Square

New Roxbury Boys' Club
115 Warren Street

Cooper Community Center
719 Shawmut Avenue